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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - MORE REACTION TO FAROOLE'S WIN IN PUNTLAND

REF: Nairobi 52

¶1. (U) Summary: With the election and inauguration of Puntland's president complete, Puntlanders remain pleased with Abdirahman Mohamed "Faroole," their new leader. The inauguration took place on January 11 and was reportedly a well-executed ceremony punctuated by positive remarks from the outgoing president. Contacts report Faroole is seen as a more decisive leader than his predecessor, and they hope his financial experience will lead to a strengthening of the Puntland economy. End summary.

Peaceful Inauguration

¶2. (U) The January 11 inauguration of Puntland's new president, Abdirahman Mohamed "Faroole," was punctuated by encouraging remarks from outgoing president Mohamud Musse Hersi and the presence of recently-resigned Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Abdullahi Yusuf. Contacts report that all 66 Puntland MPs and many of the presidential candidates attended the ceremony, which was held at the presidential palace. Outgoing president Hersi praised Faroole as "a close friend" and promised to work constructively with the new administration, emphasizing that his political career was not over. Faroole praised Hersi for his accomplishments while in office and for having overseen a peaceful election at the designated end of his term. To warm applause, Hersi handed over a file of papers he stated were documents crucial to the president, and also ceded eight armored vehicles and more than 200 soldiers who serve as the presidential security guard.

More Perspectives on Faroole

¶3. (U) Puntlanders continue developing perspectives on Faroole, who was not viewed as a front-runner in the weeks and days prior to the election. Multiple contacts have labeled Faroole as "one of Puntland's educated elite." Most contacts cite his political experience as an asset, though many offer the caveat that Faroole was suspected of corruption during his tenure as finance minister. Faroole's wife and children reportedly remain in Australia, which is where Faroole fled after failing to win the 2005 Puntland election. We are told that, to date, no clan-based groups have spoken out against Faroole's election.

¶4. (U) Contacts tell us Puntlanders are optimistic Faroole's can improve Puntland's lot. Observers say Faroole is more decisive than his predecessor, a trait they hope will lead to quick improvement in the region's security and economic situations. Other contacts say Faroole is well-regarded since during his tenure as Finance Minister of Puntland, he was known for treating all areas of Puntland with equal respect and attention.

